

June 4, 2018

DOH-PINELLAS ENCOURAGES FLORIDIANS TO TEST YOUR WAY ON NATIONAL HIV TESTING DAY



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The Florida Department of Health in Pinellas County (DOH-Pinellas) recognizes June 27 as National HIV Testing Day. This year's theme is "Test Your Way. Do It Today," serves as a reminder that HIV testing has never been more convenient because there are more ways than ever to get tested.

This year, DOH-Pinellas and the Pinellas Planning Partnership (PPP) will provide no-cost HIV testing, information, food and more from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. on Friday, June 29, at Walgreens, 3350 Central Ave. in St. Petersburg.



The June 29 testing event is a collaboration among the Pinellas Planning Partnership, which includes DOH-Pinellas, Empath Partners in Care (EPIC), Metro Wellness and Community Centers, Clear Health Alliance, Help Us Help U, Youth Education Services (YES), St. Petersburg Chapter of National Black Nurses Association, Inc., Neighborly Care Network, AIDS Healthcare Foundation (AHF) and Walgreens.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that all individuals 13–64 years old be tested for HIV at least once during their lifetime, and persons at increased risk for HIV infection be tested at least annually.

Florida remains a national leader in HIV testing, with more than 1,400 registered HIV test sites (including each county health department and community-based organizations) which provide high-quality, confidential testing services at low or no cost. Last year, more than 340,000 HIV tests were conducted through Florida's registered HIV test sites. Testing is also available through doctors' offices and other health care facilities.

With early diagnosis, individuals can begin appropriate treatment and care resulting in better health outcomes. Studies have shown that providing antiretroviral therapy as early as possible after diagnosis improves a patient's health, reduces transmission and can eventually lead to undetectable HIV viral loads.

HIV-negative individuals are encouraged to reduce the chance of contracting HIV by using prevention strategies. As part of our strategic efforts to eliminate HIV in Florida, the Department is working to make Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) medication available at no cost at all 67

CHDs by the end of this year. PrEP is a once-daily pill that can reduce the chance of acquiring HIV in HIV-negative individuals. **PrEP should be used in conjunction with other prevention methods like condoms to reduce the chance of infection.** According to CDC, taking PrEP daily reduces the chance of getting HIV by more than 90 percent.

PrEP will be made available through CHD Sexually Transmitted Disease and Family Planning Clinics and patients can be provided with up to a 90-day supply of medications. Some CHDs may offer PrEP through a specialty clinic. Find a PrEP provider near you with the department's [PrEP Providers List](#).

You can locate HIV counseling, testing and referral sites by visiting www.KnowYourHIVStatus.com or texting 'FLHIV' to 898211.

For more information, call the Florida HIV/AIDS Hotline at 1-800-FLA-AIDS or 1-800-352-2437; En Español, 1-800-545-SIDA; In Creole, 1-800-AIDS-101. To chat with a live counselor at the Florida HIV/AIDS Hotline, visit www.211bigbend.org/flhivaids hotline.

About the Florida Department of Health

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